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Death rate in Berlin and other cities.

The death rate of Berlin for the week ended December 10 was considerably lower than in the preceding week, amounting, calculated on the year, to 15.1 per thousand of the population, and corresponded almost exactly with the rate for the same week of last year. Only 8 of the large towns and cities of Germany had more favorable rates than Berlin during the week in question, viz, Nuremberg, Bremen, Hanover, Schöneberg (with 13 per thousand), Charlottenburg (with 12.7), etc. The following cities had considerably higher rates of mortality than Berlin, namely: Rixdorf (with 17.3), Hamburg, Munich, Frankfort-on-Main, Stuttgart, Dresden, Breslau, Königsberg, Leipzig, Halle, Brunswick, Cologne, as well as London, Paris, and Vienna. During the past three weeks the number of deaths among infants remained about the same, the number of deaths among the higher-age classes alone having decreased. The rate of mortality of infants—3.5 per year and thousand—was lower than the Hamburg, Munich, and Leipzig figures. Acute diseases of the respiratory organs claimed 90 victims (including 19 from influenza). Acute intestinal diseases caused 30 deaths. Furthermore, there were registered 80 deaths from phthisis pulmonalis, 35 deaths from cancer, 12 deaths from scarlet fever, 6 deaths from measles. Finally, 4 persons died by violence.

GREAT BRITAIN.

Plague on steamship Weybridge at London.

[From the Bulletin Quarantenaire, Alexandria, December 15, 1904.]

The steamship *Weybridge*, from Rio de la Plata, arrived at London November 30. The sanitary authority reported a case of suspect plague in the person of a member of the crew. The ship was detained at Denton to land the patient, convey him to a hospital, and perform disinfection. Doctor Klein confirmed the diagnosis of plague.

The patient was isolated in the port hospital near the mouth of the Thames, while the vessel and effects were disinfected and measures taken for the destruction of rats on board. No passenger arrived by the *Weybridge*. The crew was placed under observation.

INDIA.

Reports from Bombay—Cholera, plague, and smallpox mortality—Transactions of inspection service—Abstract of paper on plague transmission by rats and fleas.

Acting Assistant Surgeon Edward Hume reports, December 10 and 17, as follows:

Mortality of Bombay city.

	Week ended—		
	Nov. 29.	Dec. 6.	Dec. 13.
Plague attacks	88	....	83
Plague deaths	74	76	72
Plague mortality per 1,000	4.95	5.09	4.82
Smallpox deaths	5	14	19
Cholera deaths	[a]1	2	2
Total deaths	685	723	693
Total mortality per 1,000	45.90	48.44	46.43

[a] Case imported by sea. Death at the wharf.

Cholera was not epidemic, attacks being 2 and deaths 2 during the week. Both cases were imported, 1 from Kathiawar, in the province of Gujerat, and 1 from Elephanta, an island 7 miles away, across the harbor. Out of 83 plague cases, 5 were imported.

Transactions during the week ended December 17, 1904.

Sanitary certificate No. 65 (accompanying consular invoice No. 285 of 1904) and sanitary certificate No. 66 (accompanying consular invoice No. 286 of 1904) were issued on December 15, 1904, each for 4,000 baskets of onions shipped per steamship *Ischia* to Manila. The onions were grown at Lonaud, on the highlands of the Deccan, a place free from cholera.

Abstract of a paper on plague, rats, and fleas. By Capt. Glen Liston, M. D.

Plague is a rat disease which, under favoring circumstances, is not infrequently communicated to man. The disease may, therefore, be said to be accidental and certainly avoidable if there be a distance between rats and men. The idea that rats play the most important part in the spread of plague is no new one, for it was recognized by the ancients as well as by more recent authorities. If it is a rat's disease, then it is likely that the disease has its own distinct laws of origination and continuance among these animals. Such a study has been neglected. We must know more about the life and habits of rats, so far as these have a bearing on the spread of plague. There are two species of domestic rats: *Mus decumanus*, the common rat found in Europe, a burrowing rodent living in drains and cellars; and *Mus rattus*, the common rat of Bombay and the East generally, living often in the roofs of houses, and even in trees. The latter is more truly a domestic rat. Plague might rage as an epizöotic among rats of the species *Mus decumanus* and man would have little chance of infection, but an epidemic of plague among rats of the species *Mus rattus* is very liable to be communicated to man.

The species of rat affected with plague has an important bearing on the spread of the disease in man, not from any inherent difference in the susceptibility to the disease in the particular disease, but because of the habits of the species. The disappearance of plague from Europe was coincident with the invasion of that continent by the brown rat and the displacement, by that species, of the black rat. While the habits of the black rat played an important part in the spread of plague, the habits of men encouraged or discouraged the prevalence of this species of rat. In Europe the brown rat displaced the black rat as solid buildings became erected, as drainage systems were developed, as stables were separated from dwelling houses, as shops, warehouses, and granaries were no longer used as human habitation. As stone and wooden floors displaced mud and rush-covered ground, as beds became used in place of heaps of straw, so the black rat was driven from his haunts, and the brown rat had it all his own way. Man and rats were separated from one another and plague ceased to trouble, for man played an important part in spreading the disease among rats. Rats, like men, are gregarious in their ways, with their quarters for the poor and